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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0259
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5454
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 3117
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 1344
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 1315
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 2293
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 4969
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2562
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 3136
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 3003
RUEHBA/AMCONSUL PERTH 1176
RHHJJPI/USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 001864

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [ID](#)

SUBJECT: THINK TANKER MAKES QUIXOTIC RUN FOR PRESIDENCY

REF: A. JAKARTA 1741

[1](#)B. JAKARTA 1477

[1](#)C. JAKARTA 1441

[1](#)D. JAKARTA 1405

[1](#)E. JAKARTA 1366

[1](#)F. JAKARTA 1043 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Pol/C Joseph L. Novak, reasons 1.4(b+d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Rizal Mallarangeng, the head of a Jakarta think tank and a well-known political analyst, is saying to one and all that he is running for president. Although he has not officially announced, Mallarangeng is already sponsoring some TV and billboard ads. By uttering the word "change" like a mantra, Mallarangeng apparently hopes his candidacy catches fire. While well-regarded by Jakarta's chattering classes, no one thinks that Mallarangeng--who has no party organization and no links at the village-level--stands much of a chance. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) This message is part of Mission's background series on candidates and political parties ahead of the April 2009 national legislative and July 2009 presidential elections. Ref a reviews President Yudhoyono and his Democrat Party, Ref b discusses former General Wiranto and the Hanura party, Ref c discusses former president Megawati and the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), Ref d concerns the National Awakening Party (PKB), Ref e focuses on Golkar and Ref f analyzes the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS).

A THINK TANKER FOR PRESIDENT?

[1](#)3. (C) One of Indonesia's leading think tankers is running for president. Rizal Mallarangeng, the head of the Freedom Institute, a public policy institute focused on democratization and decentralization, is telling one and all that he is running for president (the election takes place in July 2009). Mallarangeng is well-regarded among Jakarta's chattering classes and is a fixture on the cocktail party circuit. He hosts a weekly public affairs program on a major all-news TV station. He is well-connected: his older brother, Andi, serves as spokesman for President Yudhoyono. A former Fulbright recipient, Mallarangeng, 44, received his PhD from Ohio State in 2000.

CHANGE IS THE WORD

¶4. (C) Mallarangeng has not officially announced his candidacy for president. He has already put up some billboard ads and placed some ads on TV, however. These ads basically extol the need for "change" and the need for a "new generation" of Indonesian leaders to lead the country into the future. One of his billboards--placed strategically at a major traffic interchange in Jakarta--says (somewhat enigmatically) "Where there is a will, there is a way." He reiterates these relatively vague points on his TV talk show and with contacts when asked about his presidential plans.

¶5. (C) In a recent conversation with Pol/C, Mallarangeng said he wanted to become president so that he could "prepare Indonesia to take its place as one of Asia's most successful countries." He added that he was very impressed with the U.S. election and the focus on the need for "change" by both Senator Obama and Senator McCain. Based on our soundings, it is not clear where Mallarangeng falls on the Indonesian political spectrum. Not affiliated with any party, he used to write speeches occasionally for then President Megawati, but he no longer seems close to her and her populist brand of politics. Relatively liberal with respect to social issues, he also does not seem to be close to any of the Islamic-oriented parties.

A REAL DARK HORSE

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¶6. (C) There are dark horses and there are pitch black dark horses and Mallarangeng is in the latter category. No one gives him any chance to win. While he appears to have some money for ads, he has no party apparatus and no known link to Indonesia's villages where many of the voters live. (Note: Some of his campaign's financing may come from Minister for the People's Welfare Aburizal Bakrie, one of Indonesia's richest men who is a major contributor to the Freedom Institute.)

¶7. (C) To be sure, there is a hunger for new leadership in the country. In addition to Mallarangeng, other Indonesians are talking about the need for generational change: Dino Djalal, a key adviser to President Yudhoyono, and other Indonesian experts and bureaucrats formed a non-partisan group called "the Modernizers" which stresses these points. That said, these new leaders will probably have to wait for the next presidential election in 2014 to really emerge. Through his current efforts, Mallarangeng may be setting himself up for a run in 2014 or after or simply trying to enhance his profile among Jakarta's elites.

HUME